

**STATEMENT
OF
PURPOSE**

August 2014

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Foster Care Link is an independent fostering agency established in April 2004. Its primary aim is to provide Muslim foster carers for Muslim children in the care system. The service is based in Stoke Newington, North East London and recruits carers from Greater London and surrounding counties.
- 1.2 Foster Care Link opened a sub-office in Oldham just over three years ago. The sub-office recruits foster carers in North West England. The overall management of this sub-office is maintained by the London office.
- 1.3 This Statement of Purpose has been produced to meet Foster Care Link's obligations under Standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulations 3 and 4 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.
- 1.4 It provides a clear statement of the aims and objectives of our Fostering Services and sets out our strategy for meeting those aims and objectives. Throughout the Statement of Purpose is the vital and consistent theme of safeguarding children and young people.
- 1.5 The Statement also provides details of:
- Our principles and standards of care
 - The services we provide
 - The management structure of the Service
 - The numbers, relevant qualifications and experience of our staff
 - The numbers and types of carers provided by the Service
 - The numbers of complaints and their outcomes
 - The procedures and processes for recruiting, approving, training, supporting and reviewing carers
 - An overview of policies and procedures
 - Arrangements for revision and circulation
- 1.6 Our last Ofsted Inspection in July 2011 rated the Agency as good overall, with outstanding features.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Foster Care Link aims to provide a high quality fostering service to looked after children, their birth parents and to social work colleagues.
- 2.2 To ensure safe, stable and consistent care for every child placed with a Foster Care Link carer, through a commitment to a high level of support to our foster carers. We

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believe that foster care is not separate from the rest of children's social care, but an integral and continuing part of everyone's duty to protect and safeguard children.

- 2.3 We strongly believe that the placement of choice for such children will be with families that match their racial, cultural and religious background as closely as possible.
- 2.4 Foster Care Link will endeavour to address the specific needs of individual religious, cultural and racial groups at all times.
- 2.5 If the relationship with the child's birth family has irretrievably broken down, a closely matched placement would ideally last until adulthood.
- 2.6 The objective of Foster Care Link is to become the first alternative choice for Local Authorities that are finding it difficult to effectively match Muslim, Asian, Black and Ethnic-Minority children from their own resources. Although most of our foster carers are Muslim, many are willing to take ethnically matched non-Muslim children.
- 2.7 In meeting the above objective, we aim to recruit, assess, train and support a sufficiently large and diverse pool of carers, therefore enabling the agency to provide placements that are able to meet the assessed needs of every child referred to us by Local Authorities.
- 2.8 We aim to provide support services that ensure the retention of experienced, skilled foster carers and to actively promote and support training opportunities for all foster carers.
- 2.9 It is our intention that at all times the services provided are effective and that practices are clear, open, honest and fair to all service users.

3. PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS OF CARE

- 3.1 We recognise foster carers as the Agency's most valuable assets, and that they should be viewed and treated with such respect at all times.
- 3.2 We believe that children have the right to be protected from harm and abuse.
- 3.3 We recognise that there may be times when Carers fail to protect children or put them at risk. At such times the welfare of the child is paramount.
- 3.4 The paramount importance of the child's welfare may on occasion bring us into conflict with Carers.
- 3.5 In such circumstances we will seek to ensure that Carers have access to appropriate advice and support.
- 3.6 When matching children with carers we will seek to ensure the following, unless any of these are inconsistent with promoting the welfare of the child:
 - Siblings are placed together.
 - Contact with birth family and friends is facilitated.

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- Children are placed as close to home as possible.
 - Children are placed with Carers that match their racial, cultural, religious and linguistic background as closely as possible.
 - Children are permanently matched with carers as soon as possible, where this is consistent with their care plan.
 - Wherever possible there will be a period of introduction before the placement commences.
 - The views of the child are sought prior to and, on a regular basis, during the placement.
 - Birth parents are encouraged and supported in playing a positive role, whilst their child is looked after.
 - The educational and health care needs, including any needs arising from a child's disability are met by the proposed placement.
- 3.7 Safe caring plans will be produced by all Carers and approved by all placing Social Workers, as far as possible prior to the commencement of a placement.

4. SERVICES PROVIDED

- 4.1 Foster Care Link seeks to provide a comprehensive fostering service, which includes providing planned and emergency foster care for individual children and sibling groups of all ages, across the full range of short term, longer term and respite care placements. We also provide "Staying Put" arrangements for young people who have been in foster care and have attained the age of 18 years. We offer parent and child placements, with carers who have received appropriate training to deal with such placements.
- 4.2 The Agency will support this service by providing:
- Close links with the Local Authority Departments it works with, to ensure integrated planning and provision for individual service users.
 - A clearly defined and effectively administered payments scheme, including a set professional fee payment for carers.
 - Ongoing support and training for new and existing carers, eventually including an active Children's Workforce Development Council programme.
 - Assessments of prospective carers in line with national standards, including preparation, training sessions and individual assessments.
 - A fostering panel, constituted and administered in line with regulatory requirements, which considers and makes recommendations about the approval of all prospective new carers, the first and thereafter every third annual review

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of registration of carers, and advises on service development. The agency will recruit and maintain a central list of Panel members.

- Appropriately trained and experienced Social Work and support staff to provide all carers with a named Supervising Social Worker. The Supervising Social Worker will provide ongoing support, information, advice and supervision to carers as well as monitoring the work of all Foster Care Link registered foster carers.
- Annual reviews of the registration and performance of all approved carers.

5. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

- 5.1 Foster Care Link's Responsible Individuals are Mr Munaf Zina and Mr Ismail Amaan. Foster Care Link also trades as Foster Care Link Ltd under a Memorandum of Understanding. The Companies House registered Directors of Foster Care Link Ltd are Mr Munaf Zina, Mr Ismail Amaan, Mrs Sabera Zina, Mrs Sairra Amaan, Mrs Aziza Zina and Mrs Farah Zina.
- 5.2 Both Responsible Individuals, Mr Munaf Zina and Mr Ismail Amaan, act as working Directors of the agency, and will appoint professional independent parties to advise on matters related to the business.
- 5.3 The Registered Manager is Peter Howes, who is a qualified registered social worker with 43 years social work experience, 33 years of which have been in family placement management. The line manager of the Registered Manager is Ismail Amaan.
- 5.4 Supervising Social Workers, administrative and other appropriate staff will be appointed to carry out the functions of the agency as detailed above. The line manager for social work staff will be the Registered Manager and other staff will be managed by one of the Directors.

6. STAFFING

- 6.1 Foster Care Link's activities will be led by the Registered Manager. Supervising Social Workers are responsible for acting as link workers for foster carers.
- 6.2 In accordance with the National Minimum Standards, the Registered Manager has a DipSW qualification (or equivalent), an NVQ Level 4 (or equivalent) qualification in Management and a minimum of two years senior level work experience in the fostering field.
- 6.3 All Supervising Social Workers have a DipSW qualification (or equivalent) and a minimum of two years work experience in child related social work.
- 6.4 Foster Care Link also makes use of suitably qualified (DipSW) and experienced Social Work staff to complete assessments of prospective carers and present these to Panel.
- 6.5 Adequate administrative staff exist to provide full support to Social Work staff.
- 6.6 Further Social Work staff will be recruited as required by the number of fostering placements arranged by the agency and the associated workload this creates.

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6.7 Details of all current staff are attached to this Statement of Purpose in Appendix 1

7. FOSTER CARERS

7.1 All foster carers are assessed, trained and approved in line with current legislation and best practice.

7.2 Foster carers are expected to attend regular post approval training and this will be addressed in carers' annual reviews.

7.3 Foster carers are recognised as essential members of the team around the child and are involved and supported with planning and decision making in respect of the child.

7.4 Foster carers will be given delegated authority to make day to day decisions about the child's health, education leisure activities where this is an agreed part of the child's placement plan.

8. CHILDREN

8.1 All children will be matched and placed with foster carers who can best meet the child's perceived needs.

8.2 Children should always be made welcome in the foster home and treated and valued as a member of the family.

8.3 All children should have a placement plan when they are placed or within five days of placement. Foster Care Link social workers will seek to ensure that this always happens and if no placement plan is received will record the reasons for this.

8.4 Where English is not the child's first language and no suitable linguistic match can be identified, both the child and the foster carers will be given access to services and information, to enable positive communication.

8.5 Although all the children/young people placed with Foster Care Link carers will have a social worker from their placing authority, the foster carers supervising social worker will also regular see and talk to the child/young person to ensure they have no concerns about their care.

9. COMPLAINTS

9.1 We welcome comments on our service and will pursue a policy of actively seeking the views of service users, including children and their parents and placing agencies.

9.2 A comprehensive complaints policy has been adopted by the agency, which meets the National Minimum Standards. This encourages all parties to submit complaints if they wish to do so, which will be dealt with in line with the procedure.

9.3 During the period from 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014, Foster Care Link received no formal complaints.

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10. RECRUITMENT, APPROVAL, TRAINING, SUPPORT AND REVIEW OF FOSTER CARERS

Recruitment

- 10.1 The Service aims to recruit a flexible and diverse pool of carers who are able to meet the needs of all children referred for a foster placement.
- 10.2 Foster Care Link has an ongoing campaign via its website and advertising in appropriate journals, for the recruitment of Muslim foster carers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.
- 10.3 The Agency has a recruitment and retention strategy.
- 10.4 The BAAF Form F is used for assessment reports on prospective applicants , in line with our assessment procedure.
- 10.5 The assessment process will include the taking up of statutory references, including Disclosure and Barring Service checks, of all adult members of the household and other adults who may be in sole charge of a foster child at any time. The applicants will be required to provide medical references, personal references and employment references, as well as participate in training and assessment visits from Agency social workers.

Approval

- 10.6 Completed assessments are presented to the Fostering Panel who will make a recommendation on the suitability of the applicant, to the agency decision-maker.
- 10.7 The decision-maker will within seven working days, either confirm approval or notify the applicant that (s)he is minded not to approve the application.
- 10.8 Should the decision-maker be minded not to approve, the applicant will have twenty-eight calendar days in which to make further representations. They will be advised that they can either appeal back to the agency or apply to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) for a review of their application. If further representations are made to the agency, the Fostering Panel will consider these before the decision-maker reaches a final decision. If the applicant(s) decide to apply to the IRM for a review, then the agency decision maker must await the outcome of the IRM panel before making a final decision.
- 10.9 If the agency decision maker confirms their decision not to approve, there is no further appeal against this decision. Applicants may however use the complaints procedure if they feel they have been treated unfairly by the agency during the process of decision making.

Training

- 10.10 The Fostering Service places a high value on the training of Carers and we believe that training and skills development is an integral part of the fostering task from the point of application to 'retirement'.

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- 10.11 All applicants will be required to complete training and attend preparation groups before they become active Carers.
- 10.12 All carers will be required to complete a mandatory training programme within a specified period. (Unless they can evidence previous and up-to-date relevant training.)
- 10.13 Where more than one person is approved as a carer in a household, all will be expected to fulfil this requirement.
- 10.14 The Fostering Service will ensure that the required training is accessible to all carers, through adopting a flexible approach.
- 10.15 Supervising Social Workers will complete a training profile (Personal Development Plan) with each Carer, which will be reviewed and updated annually.

Support

- 10.16 A qualified Supervising Social Worker will support each foster carer.
- 10.17 Supervising Social Workers will visit all Foster Carers at an agreed minimum frequency and maintain telephone contact outside of these visits. Unannounced visits will also be made from time to time and at least annually.
- 10.18 Supervising Social Workers will visit Foster Carers at other times when reasonably requested by the Carer.
- 10.19 The Supervising Social Worker will keep in mind the needs of Foster Carer's own children and ensure that these are discussed as part of the Carer's annual review.
- 10.20 All Foster Carers will have access to a dedicated 'out of hours' support service.
- 10.21 All Foster Carers will have access to a fostering support group where practicable, which may be facilitated by the Fostering Service or other Carers.
- 10.22 The Fostering Service will ensure that the Foster Carer is provided with all the necessary information and practical support they need to care for specific children and that the carer is promptly and fully reimbursed for the agreed costs of caring for a child

Reviews of Approval

- 10.23 The Fostering Service will review the approval of all Foster Carers not more than a year after approval and thereafter whenever the Service considers necessary, but at intervals of no more than a year.
- 10.24 The first review will be considered by the Fostering Panel who will make a recommendation to the agency decision-maker.
- 10.25 Subsequently the Panel will consider reviews once every 3 years, (see 10.27).
- 10.26 Reviews during intervening years will be considered by the Registered Manager who will confirm the Carer's continuing registration, except as in 10.26.

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10.27 Reviews will also be considered by Panel in the following circumstances:

- Where there is a proposed change of the terms of a Carer's registration
- Where a Foster Carer resigns
- Where there is a proposal to terminate the approval of a Foster Carer.
- Where there has been a serious complaint against a Foster Carer.
- Where there has been a child protection investigation involving the carer or a member of their household or where there are significant concerns about the Carer's standards of care

10.28 In carrying out reviews, the service will always seek to obtain the views of the following:

- The Foster Carer(s) and members of their household
- Children who have been placed with the Foster Carer during the preceding twelve months and their parents
- Social workers who have had children in placement during the preceding twelve months

10.29 All reviews will consider the training needs of the Foster Carer and the support needs of the Carer's own children.

10.30 Where Foster Care Link is minded not to approve an applicant as a foster carer or is minded to terminate the approval of an existing foster carer, the applicant/foster carer will be advised of their right to apply to the Independent Review Mechanism to have their case reviewed.

11. OVERVIEW OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

11.1 Foster Care Link has a range of policies designed to protect children. These include a Child Protection Policy and Procedure, a Safe Care Policy designed to safeguard all children in placements with our Foster Carers, an Internet Safety Policy, a Missing from Care Policy and a Child Sexual Exploitation Policy.

11.2 Foster Care Link has a Representations and Complaints Policy and Procedure, designed to allow all users of its service to comment on the quality of that service. In addition there is a procedure for dealing with Complaints Against Foster Carers. Children and Young People placed with our carers are provided with a 'Children's Guide' which explains how to make comments or raise concerns about the care they are receiving.

11.3 All Foster Carers are provided with a Foster Carer Handbook which sets out all the policies and procedures that directly affect the Foster Carers. This includes a Policy on the Use of Control and Sanctions, Safe Care and Keeping Children Safe on the Internet.

11.4 Other policies include a Fostering Panel Policy, a Whistleblowing Policy and an Equal

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Opportunities Policy.

- 11.5 Full copies of these and other Foster Care Link policies and procedures are available on request.

12. QUALITY MONITORING

- 12.1 The quality of the services provided by Foster Care Link is monitored and improved in a variety of ways. On a day to day basis regular formal and informal staff supervision and guidance is provided. The Fostering Panel provides a quality control for foster carer assessments and feedback from service users comes via foster carer reviews, child care reviews and the complaints procedure.
- 12.2 Foster Care Link, in line with all fostering service providers, is regularly inspected by Ofsted. Copies of the inspector's report are available on the Ofsted's website www.ofsted.gov.uk
- 12.3 Foster Care Link is also part of the London Care Placements agreement, to enable its use as a preferred provider by all London Boroughs.

13. REVISION AND CIRCULATION

- 13.1 This Statement has been produced by the Registered Provider of the Service.
- 13.2 The Statement will be reviewed annually and at other times where necessary. Staff and Foster Carers will be consulted on proposed revisions if appropriate.
- 13.3 The Registered Manager is responsible for ensuring that the Statement is updated or modified when necessary, but at least annually.
- 13.4 In conducting the annual review of the Statement, the Registered Manager will take into account the views of directors, staff, carers and children and parents using the Service.
- 13.5 The revised statement will be presented to Fostering Panel annually for their consideration and formal approval will be the responsibility of the Registered Provider.
- 13.6 The Statement of Purpose is sent annually to Ofsted.
- 13.7 Amended Statements will be provided to Ofsted within twenty-eight days of approval by the Registered Provider.
- 13.8 The Statement will be provided to all staff, all foster carers and anyone else requesting a copy.
- 13.9 In addition, a summary of the Statement will be provided to children placed in foster care of sufficient age and understanding in the Children's Guide. A full copy will be provided on request to children or parents using the Service.
- 13.10 A copy of the Statement of Purpose is available on the Foster Care Link web-site. www.fostercarelink.com

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13.11 This edition of the Statement of Purpose was revised in August 2014 and approved by Registered Provider in September 2014.

14. CONTACTS

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APPENDIX 1

FOSTER CARE LINK STAFF

London Office

Munaf Zina	-	Director and Responsible Individual
Ismail Amaan	-	Director and Responsible Individual
Peter Howes	-	Registered Manager
Ayub Patel	-	Office Manager
Abdurrahman Sayed	-	Deputy Manager and Supervising Social Worker
Khadijah Hoodless	-	Supervising Social Worker

North West Sub-Office

Saleem Akhtar	-	Social Worker
Amjid Mahmood	-	Office Manager